

May 19, 2009

Dear Families,

How quickly time is flying as we approach the end of the 2008-2009 school year. Thanks to each of you who have been working so hard to bring your tuition payments down to zero. We still have \$46,000 outstanding. Call me if I can help in any way. In the meantime, if you receive an exclusion call or note, do NOT send your child(ren) to school. They will not be allowed into class and we will be calling you to take them home. It is almost the end of May and too much tuition is outstanding. We have payroll to meet and cannot do so when about \$1800 comes in Each day. We are looking to everyone to make at least one payment this month to stay off of the exclusion list.

Included today in your packet are the results of your child's Terra Nova testing. We tested this year under unusual circumstances. Shortly after Christmas the Archdiocese learned that the 2nd edition of the Terra Nova that we had been preparing our children for could not be used due to a copyright problem. We were forced to use the new 3rd edition Terra Nova that was designed to be used in the 2009-2010 school year. There are many differences between the two editions and they cannot be compared as they have been in the past years. The items on this test were developed with higher order thinking skills as the basis for the test. We were told by CTB-McGraw Hill that we could expect at least a 10 point difference in scores from last year. In grades 3-8 Terra Nova introduced a new Language test that tests sentence structure, writing strategies, and editing skills. This section focused purely on writing, writing strategies, and editing. First and second grade combined reading and writing. This edition was very difficult for some of our little ones. Their test was read to them, and the teacher could not re-read a question. Children had to listen, think, and answer.

We are still in the stage of analyzing the scores—looking at the various skills that were strong and those that need attention in the curriculum in the fall. Since we adopted new social studies curriculum and social studies reading material of great interest to our children, we definitely saw a significant increase in those scores. Our science scores were low because we had very old science books that were not aligned with the Archdiocesan and Terra Nova skills. There will be new science materials and technology next year that will be aligned with the curriculum, will include lab experiences throughout the grades, will include problem based learning using teacher identified websites for further interest and support. Our middle school science program will also be aligned with the Archdiocesan curriculum and will be strongly lab based with a strong technology component. We know those programs will influence our science scores significantly. If you have any questions about your child's scores, feel free to contact their teacher.

We are preparing to adopt a new math program in K through Grade 6—strong, challenging. We will be supported by Dr. Eileen Quinn Knight who has been working with us this year—teaching and coaching us as we teach in our classrooms. The curriculum will be carefully mapped to guarantee that students have all the skills they need by the end of the year.

We will be investing in new technology, but we will also be investing in a very strong fire wall that will prevent our students from accessing any sights that breach our technology rules set by the Archdiocese. We are able to do that this summer thanks to the Patrons grant we have to do this kind of work. With money being so tight, we want to use every dollar carefully.

Today was a beautiful day at church. Our Preschool children did all of the readings for the Mass and chose the music. Oh, what a celebration. They read with louder voices than some of our older students. God had to be smiling because they were. They chose songs that Mr. Glover had been teaching for awhile and they were full of energy and joy. Special thanks to Ms. Fannon who insisted on having an opportunity to prepare her children for this experience. She and Mrs. Botello and Ms. Hughes were such a part of it as well.

Special thanks to Mrs. Grankowski who sponsored two sessions of Math Olympics for the various grade levels this past week with the help of her Student Council. The children enjoyed it so much. Look back on the calendar we sent home last week to see what is coming up next week. I think we have a drumming competition coming up. I will remind you next week.

At the end of the school year, it has been a tradition that parents come to school on a Saturday and work at cleaning the school. If you have a grant or scholarship of any kind, you are expected to be there. Volunteerism was one of the requirements of receiving the grant. There have been a few volunteers this year, but not many. I will be asking Mr. Ortiz to organize this day. In the meantime, I am expecting Saturday, June 13th to be the clean up/gardening day. Mark your calendar and watch for more news.

At this time of the year, you know that we all look at what we are doing and make decisions about staying or leaving. Mrs. Callahan will be retiring from Kindergarten, Ms. Fannon will be returning to her home town in Michigan where she will be assuming a new role in early childhood education, and Mrs. Arnold will be pursuing a new position. Sister Jeanette's community has asked her to move all the way out to Colorado to undertake teaching and an additional position there. We will miss each of these teachers and are grateful for the way they graced our lives and those of our children. I am currently interviewing for a PreK teacher, a first and third grade teacher. We have had a fair number of applicants, but I have not found anyone that I feel would fill the positions that are open. It is early yet. Unfortunately, it will be necessary for us to downsize other staff members since we have a large deficit in our budget that we have asked the Archdiocese to assist us with \$287,000 that we cannot afford.

So, you can imagine that life is very busy for us all. We continue to keep all of you in prayer who have been affected by job losses or other hardships.

May God hold us all close to His heart.
Ms. Lee